

Self-Improvement.

BY E. J. HOLSINGER.

Notes from a letter delivered in Lathrop, Cal., requested to be published in EVANGELIST.

If, to you, there is dropped a word or sentence which will take root and better a single life or add one atom to its accomplishment or happiness, then, indeed my time has not been spent in vain. I have decided to speak to you on a subject which should, and doubtless is often the subject of your thoughts. It is that of self improvement, or, self education, and is always seriously considered before substantial progress, in the way of intellectual advancement can be made. We all must realize sooner or later that we can do more for ourselves than others can do for us.

I do not wish to be understood as opposing collegiate education; for, on the contrary I warmly advocate it and advise every one to seek such.

It has often been said, and by parents, there is no use educating that child, he cannot learn. A graver mistake was never made. Give every one an opportunity to increase that knowledge which he may possess. But we are told, here is so and so who attended college four years and notwithstanding is a fool. Now the difference between a fool out of college and a fool in college is greater than the text would lead one to believe. A fool who has never been in college sleeps in serene unconsciousness of his state and deems himself the wisest man in the neighborhood, while the other knows of his weaknesses and deficiencies and therefore gives his friends less annoyance. I mention this so if perchance any of you should meet a representation of that class you may benefit them by advising a collegiate course. But let me say to you, do not call a child a fool because he seems dull, slow or plodding or a man so because he has a small head. Quality more than quantity tells in a life-time. It is not always the bright pupils in our schools and colleges that make the leaders in active life. Often the dullest win in the race.

I am now reminded of an incident which placed the two mounted animals over the gate of a zoological garden in Philadelphia. The visitor entering the garden is struck with curiosity by beholding two figures. On one side of the entrance, crouched, as if ready for a desperate leap, with eyes glowing with fire is a large, mounted lion; on the other is a donkey, sober and sedate. This is the story told: some years ago the lion was the pride of the garden. One day, by some means his cage was not properly secured, and soon he discovered his freedom. After wandering about the garden for some time and tiring of the monotony, he sprang to the top of the garden wall and from thence to an adjoining pasture. He decided to dine, and gazing about he at length selected from the many animals as the most stupid and weak a poor miserable donkey, who dozing in the sun stood with closed eyes chewing the quid of sweet and bitter fancy. Stealthily the lion approached and for a few minutes glanced on his intended victim, when with savage roar he leaped upon him. The struggle which followed was sharp and decisive. In a few minutes the lion lay dead kicked to death by the slow lazy donkey. Shortly after the successful combatant also, lay dead and the two beasts were mounted and placed over the gate where they now stand monumental to perseverance. Oftimes the dull student outstrips the brilliant one and rises in the world to great honor and respect; while the one from whom we hoped so much never rises above mediocrity. If a child is found stupid try the harder to teach him. If you find yourself sluggish in thought, put forth your energies and overcome it, resting assured if your efforts to gain knowledge be rightly applied will receive their reward.

It requires no argument to convince us that improvement is constantly going on, both in the intellectual and the physical world. We are never, neither can be, at a still. We must move up or down. For years we have been gradually, yes rapidly, advancing and yet there is room for improvement.

During the last fifty years inventive genius has had full sway. The steam engine has revolutionized labor. The face of the continents is bound

from coast to coast with continuous lines of glistering steel rails. Telegraph wires span the world with a misty, net work and silently men's thoughts, direct from the brain, flash from continent to continents. Great men of the world rise in the midst of congressional and other deliberate assemblies and as their words flow from their eloquent lips, they are caught by the quick and nimble fingers of the reporter and before the echoes die away are recorded for the future reference and enlightenment of coming generations.

The telephone, electric light and other inventions have made this an age of wonders. We have revolutionized the world conquered the wind and tide; we have built ships so large that Noah's Ark would barely serve us now for a life-boat; we run railroads over and under rivers, around mountains and through them; invaded the sea and plundered its watery depth; chained the lightning and made it the silent interpreter of thought, giving it the globe for its circuit, and I think we may say this powerful agent, not many years hence will turn the ponderous wheels of our factories.

However, in this great bustle of the invention, men have not neglected to improve and broaden their intellects. For this thousands of volumes of valuable books fill the shelves of our libraries, and year after year the pyramid grows higher and higher. How we may advance and extend our knowledge is an ever present question with us, children are being sent to schools and colleges that this result may be attained; for, to the youth we look for the greatest advancement. The young must make the world what it will be in the future, just as the aged have made what it is today.

Education is not what many persons suppose, and were I asked to define it, would say it is the process by which the mind is opened and taught to realize its strength. A seven year course and diploma from Yale or Harvard may signify much or little. Nor, are we lacking in examples when such a course has clouded an average mind to reason and right judgment. Often do we see stalwart young men and beautiful young women come from our colleges with the idea that by some unexplained means they have become metamorphosed, and in their abnormal imagination and distorted judgment, they think they possess a something, undefinable that has raised them so much above their fellow mortals. Here is a common illustration. A certain young lady on her return from Vassar delighted her old parents beyond measure by her dignified bearing and accomplished manner, but, were overwhelmed with admiration when her mother proffered a glass of milk, to which she exclaimed, oh no, my dear affectionate mother, thank you, I have discovered that the esculent lacteal fluid is uncongenial to the extreme delicacy of my diabolical system. May we be preserved from girls with diabolical systems.

Oftentimes with the intense desire to "show off" what they are pleased to say was learned at college they lose sight of the courtesy due the older and there are a few deplorable cases in which almost all trace of respect for the dear old father and mother has been lost. The aim of a college is not to furnish us with all the intellectual fuel that is needed for a lifetime, but simply to teach the mind to walk unaided by others. If you desire an education, work for it, pray for it, let not a stone upturn until obtained, then make yourself useful, not only to your friends but to all with whom you come in contact. Future generations will bless you and the world will be better for your having lived.

Locke has said: "Nobody is made anything by hearing of rules or laying them up in his memory, practice must settle the habit of doing, without reflecting on the rule. We are born with faculties and powers capable of almost anything, such at least, as would carry us further than could be easily imagined; but it is only the exercise of these powers that gives us stability and skill in anything and leads us toward greater perfection."

More sublime truths than these never emanated from human brain, and if we could and would all take this thought and impress it so vividly upon our minds that no day would pass without recurrence, we would be a thousand times the better for it. The realization of this truth has made a plodding farmer president of the United States a stone mason; the greatest thinker of this age; it has made a blacksmith the greatest linguist the

world ever knew, and has raised a common boot-black to the house of parliament.

If you have an opportunity of attending an institution of learning, do so by all means; but keep firmly fixed in your mind the important fact that this alone will never make a man or woman out of you, much less a scholar. You must educate yourself, no one can do it for you. We hear of self-made men as if there were an artificial process for making scholars, and we have some who are artificial for God, neither man, made them as they are.

Do not sit down with arms folded and sigh for knowledge, it never comes in that way. What a pitiable object some people make of themselves by eternally bemoaning their fate, claiming they have no opportunities, when that very moment the golden sands are slipping through their fingers. We may learn a lesson from that humblest creature that creeps on the earth. We may persuade the most delicate flower to whisper secrets which will make our lives nobler and minds stronger.

The rocks, yon rugged mountains are ever ready to teach lessons of wisdom. The beggarly tramp who calls at your door, though he may be the lowest type of humanity, yet may teach us lessons we never could have learned from others; opportunity after another is slipping away while grumbling over imaginary obstacles.

Some persons do not need more opportunities, but less, and if they ever accomplish anything, it will be under the pressure of adversity or the sting of stricken poverty. This is confirmed by the noticable fact that great men have for the most part sprung from the humblest ranks of life. We get a schooling in poverty and adversity which though we are very unwilling to learn, yet, often is the guiding star of our lives. Many of us are so constituted that your very nature we need to be driven and will do nothing until we are compelled to act.

When a child I was told always at night to think over the days events and if I had not learned anything to remedy the defect before closing my eyes in sleep. I do not believe in this moral book-keeping, if it were closely followed, I fear at times we would feel so good that we would be tempted to steal something in order to balance the account. Morning hours is the proper time to think of lessons, and over all let every one have a care that they are fitting themselves for that which above every thing else they are best adapted and would prefer to follow. And to improve mentally or spiritually we must throw aside all pride and affectation and go humbly and honestly to work. Pride has and is now keeping multitudes in the clouds of ignorance. It makes us ashamed to commence at the bottom of the ladder; causes us to build on sand rather than to dig beneath and build firm on the solid rocks. Affectation is our direct enemy and if allowed to creep into our lives will make fools of us all.

It is not what we learn alone that makes us wiser and benefits us; it must be through application. Let us keep these thoughts fixed in our minds, together with the maxim, "Nothing gained without labor," which is written all over the intellectual heaven.

"There's the marble, there's the chisel,
Take it work it to thy will;
Thou alone can shape thy future,
Heaven sent thee strength and skill."

Stockton, Cal.

Death has again called a dear one from time to eternity. The loving face and pleasant smile and kind admonition of an affectionate husband and seemingly a father was all hushed by the icy hand of death, Wednesday morning June 23rd, 1886, (after a painful illness of about 2 years; disease complicated) leaving a wife and two of us whom he raised from childhood, to mourn his sad departure, of one so greatly loved and missed by all, yet we mourn not as those that have no hope. Uncle Henry took me when I was but a small boy some 18 years ago and his good corrections which were always positive, but given out of great love I shall never forget. Uncle Henry Sayler was born May 24th, 1832, near Beaverdam meeting house, Frederick Co., Md. His age was 54 years and 29 days. He was elected to the ministry about the year 1868. He was an able speaker and a faithful worker in the Master's cause, and strictly opposed to all innovations, pride and folly introduced into the Brethren church, and labored hard for the reformation of the same and stood strong in the established old order Brethren faith at the time of his departure. Funeral services by the Old Order Brethren, from Revelation, 14 chap., 13 verse.

G. W. G.

DIED—At her home near Aurelia, Iowa, August 8th, 1886, Sister Nancy Leonard wife of brother Wm. Leonard. The time allotted to her was 43 yr's., 2 mon's., 22 days. Deceased lingered a long time in a bed of affliction.

One week before she died, by her request, she was anointed with oil according to the commandment. Her desire was to stay with her children till they were all grown, but she said God's will be done. She leaves a kind husband and eight children, to mourn her loss, who must sooner or later cross also the river of death. Funeral services were conducted by S. B. Riest, assisted by John Earley and Solomon Groves, to an attentive congregation from the text—Be ye also ready. Matt. 24: 44.

WALTER S. MCCLAIN.

DIED, Aug. 1st, 1886, Clyde, Son of Bro. and Sis. A.G. and Mary Kelm. of cholera infantum, age 1 yr., 10 mo., and 18 days. Funeral service by Bro. Henry Brubaker.

L. L. KEIM.